

How to Begin Each Day in A Good Way

Psalm 5

Often we run into people who have what I call “a partly cloudy disposition with thunderstorms on the horizon.” They are angry, mad, discouraged. Concerning these kinds of people we have created a popular saying: “He must have got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning.” In other words he began the day in a bad way rather than a good way, and it has stayed with him all day long.

David knew it was important to begin each day in a good way. He also knew the best way to do this is with prayer. In Psalms 3-6 we have prayers for the morning and evening. Psalm 3 is a morning prayer. Psalm 4 is an evening prayer. Psalm 5 is another morning prayer (v. 3). Psalm 6 is another evening prayer (v.6). The Bible teaches us from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same our entire day should be bathed in prayer.

In this morning prayer David seeks the Lord with great intensity. He is opposed by those who would do him harm. Perhaps the background of this Psalm, like Psalms 3-4, is also the rebellion of Absalom (Alec Motyer, *Psalms by the Day*, 15-18). Combining the elements of lament and confidence, we see David asking for guidance in the midst of his enemies and their slander (vs. 8-9). Five principles are set forth for our careful reflection.

I. Talk to the Lord in Prayer

5:1-3

As the day begins David turns his face to the LORD (*Yahweh*) in prayer. Notice how we should address Him both personally and respectfully: “my King and my God.”

The one we approach is “I AM Who I AM” (Ex. 3:14), the King, the one true and living God. How do we talk to such a great God?

1) Seek the Lord in Meditation

5:1-2

The Psalm begins with a trio of parallel imperatives: 1) “listen”; 2) “consider”; 3) “pay attention.” He describes his prayer as 1) “my words,” 2) “my sighing,” 3) “the sound of my cry.” “Sighing” can connote the idea of quiet murmuring, whispering to oneself or others. James Boice notes,

“Most often we pray by words. That is, we express ourselves in proper, well-reasoned terminology. Sometimes we are in such distress that our prayers are only desperate cries for God to help us. At still other times we cannot find words adequate to express our feelings or voice what we need, though we are nevertheless still praying. But here is the encouraging thing: God hears all kinds of prayers.”

(Boice, 46)

2) Seek the Lord in the Morning

5:3

The one who is our King and our God should be sought in prayer at the beginning of each day. The phrase “in the morning” is repeated for emphasis. We should start the day in the presence of our LORD, King and God.

Verse 3 ends with the phrase “watch expectantly.” The *NKJV* translates it, “I will look up.” The *NIV* has “wait in expectation”; the *NASV* has “watch.” David says, we are to come at the beginning of each day, pleading with the Lord and presenting ourselves in prayer, eagerly expecting this will be well received by the one who is our King and our God, the LORD (*Yahweh*) Himself. Because He is my King and my God, and I am His faithful servant who seeks an audience with Him as each day begins, I can, with great eagerness and expectation, anticipate that He will hear,

consider, and give heed to my prayers. What a wise and encouraging way to begin the day.

II. See the Lord Evaluate the Wicked

5:4-6

Verses 4-6 stand in stark contrast to verses 1-3. Again the righteous man and the wicked man of Psalm 1 are seen in sharp opposition. One God will hear. The other God hates. In six striking statements God's perspective on the wicked is exposed. If you ever doubted that God hates sin, these verses will wipe that doubt out of your mind once and for all.

1) God is Displeased with Them

5:4

Our God does not delight in wickedness. He takes zero pleasure in evil. A holy God who is just and righteous in who He is and in all that He does has no pleasure at all, none, in the wicked person. Such a person is seen as wicked both in character and conduct. Psalm 34:21 says such persons "hate the righteous." God is displeased with them.

2) God will not Dwell with Them

5:4

"Evil (ones) cannot dwell" with our God. Even a temporary visitation is impossible and out of the question. As Hab. 1:13 says of the Lord, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil." Evil will never be welcomed or at home with God.

3) God will Dishonor Them

5:5

The boastful, the proud and "arrogant" (*NIV*), are singled out by David in verse 5. The haughty, the prideful, will not stand, have an audience, in God's sight (lit. "before your eyes"). The prideful and arrogant will never enjoy a face-to-face encounter with the Lord. They will only stand before Him in judgement.

4) God Distains Them

5:5

The last phrase of verse 5 catches us by surprise. There we read that our loving and gracious God “hates all evildoers.”

When I read these words it takes my breath away. The God who so loved the world... (John 3:16) hates. Yes, but read the words carefully. Don't miss the emphasis on actions. In their essence and essential being as imagers of God, the Lord loves His human creatures. But when they function as workers, instruments of evil and wickedness, God has nothing but wrath, righteous anger, yes, a just hatred. The wisdom of Proverbs 6:16-19 is helpful here. There we read, “The Lord hates six things in fact, seven are detestable to him: arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil, a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.”

My friend Sam Storms reminds us, “Have you considered to pray “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10) is to invoke divine judgement on all other kingdoms and all those who oppose the reign of God?” (“Those Troubling Psalms of Imprecation”). James Adams adds, “When we pray as Jesus taught us, we cry out to God for His blessings upon His church and for His curses upon the kingdom of the evil one” (*War Psalms of the Prince of Peace*, 52).

Steve Lawson's comment also is helpful at this point: “God rejects all who reject him. This is a Hebraism that contrasts love and hate which communicates acceptance and rejection” (*Psalms*, vol. 1, HCOT, 38).

Jesus said it this way in Luke 14:26, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, — yes, and his own life also — he cannot be my disciple.” To truly love God is to hate, reject and oppose, all that is evil. God hates sin and so should we.

5) God will Destroy Them 5:6

Again sins of the tongue are addressed. In verse 5 it was the boastful, the arrogant. Here it is liars. The Lord will “destroy those who tell lies.” Those who slander and speak falsely reveal the nature of their heart through their tongue. God will not entertain them. He will not allow their wicked words to go unpunished. Simply put: He will destroy them in righteous, holy and just judgment.

6) God Despises Them 5:6

Our LORD (*Yahweh*) abhors, strongly opposes and dislikes “violent and treacherous people,” both the bloodthirsty (lit. “the man of blood”) and the deceitful. The bloodthirsty murder with their hands. The deceitful murder with their tongue. Both are violent and treacherous acts. The Lord hates, abhors and will destroy all who live lives of such evil and wickedness.

III. Follow the Lord in His Righteous Ways 5:7-8

The word “but” in verse 7 places verses 7-8 in strong opposition to vs. 4-6. David returns to discuss and examine the one who seeks the Lord in prayer (vs. 1-3). We discover he is also the one who seeks the Lord’s house, His mercy, His guidance and direction. This kind of person the Lord will take pleasure in.

1) Pursue the Worship of God

5:7

David says, “But I enter your house” and “I bow down toward your holy temple.” As the temple had not yet been built, it is possible, as Derek Kidner suggest, “that David’s language has been adapted to the use of later worshipers” (*Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 59). David comes, as should we, to the place where God’s people come together. There is something about the people of God gathered for corporate worship that ministers to the heart and soul of a person. Here David says we find “the abundance of your faithful love,” also translated a “multitude of mercy”, “abundant loving-kindness” (*NASV*), “abundance of your steadfast love” (*ESV*). “Faithful love” is the Hebrew word *hesed*. Finding himself to be the recipient of such undeserved mercy, David says “In reverential awe” I will worship, “bow down,” in humility and respect toward the place where you manifest yourself, “Your holy temple.” Only by mercy may we approach God. Only in worship should we draw near to God.

2) Pursue the Ways of the Lord

5:8

We can, we should, ask the Lord (*Yahweh*) to lead us. Because He is a God who, 1) takes no pleasure, 2) will not give an audience, 3) will not allow to stand, 4) hates, 5) will destroy, and 6) abhors wickedness and all evil, we can be confident he will lead us in righteousness, in the right way and along the right path.

In fact when faced with opposition, confronted by enemies who would do us harm, we can ask Him to make His way straight before us. Guide me my Lord around spiritual booby-traps, theological quicksand, personal landmines. Keep me on a path that is straight; a path of integrity, honesty and humility. Direct me

away from wickedness and evil (v.4), pride and rebellion (v.5), lies, murder and deception (v.6). I want to walk on your path, not the path or way of the wicked (Psalm 1).

IV. Watch the Lord Deal with the Rebellious

5:9-10

David again addresses the wicked. He particularly notes the sins of the mouth, the evil words that flow from an evil heart. These people may be David's enemies (v.8), but ultimately their sin and rebellion is against God.

1) They are Unfaithful with Their Speech

5:9

Concerning the wicked David says, "there is nothing reliable in what they say."

The *NIV* translates the first line: "not a word from their mouth can be trusted."

Eugene Petersen in *The Message* writes, "Every word they speak is a land mine; their lungs breathe out poison gas. Their throats are gaping graves, their tongues slick as mudslides." They are dishonest and destructive in their words. Coming from their heart through their throat is death. The words are smooth and flattering, but their end is death and the graveyard. Paul cites this verse in Romans 3:13 in his catalogue of sins that makes the case for the depravity of man and the wickedness of the human heart apart from God's saving grace. How often it is that our tongue reveals the condition of our heart.

2) They Are Uncontrollable in Their Sin

5:10

David calls on the Lord for a judicial verdict of guilty: "Punish them, God." The evidence is overwhelming. Not only should God condemn them, their own counsel, or "schemes" (*NASV*, "devices"), brings them down. Their judgment is divinely enacted and self inflicted. Sin does its job on them. Sin begets sin. Sin

breeds more sin. Because of “their many crimes,” the “abundance of their transgressions” (*ESV*), they are to be cast out (*NIV*, “banished”). Bottom-line: their rebellion is against God! Therefore, the Lord will deal with them in final judgement.

V. Shout to the Lord with Joy

5:11-12

Now the perspective of those who seek God in prayer, cling to His mercy, and seek His guidance appears once again. This final section, like sections 1 and 3, looks to the Lord and considers the blessings that come to those who approach Yahweh as their King and their God. They can “rejoice”, indeed, they can “shout for joy forever.”

1) Trust the Lord and He will Protect You

5:11

Those who put their trust in the Lord are called to rejoice. Why? Because the Lord will “shelter them.” He will defend, protect, cover, “spread His protection” (*NIV*) over them.

Those who trust the Lord can trust Him to be their refuge, their divine protector. Like a great eagle spreading her wings over her young, so our great God and King spreads His covering of protection over those who seek Him in prayer, depend on His mercy, ask for His guidance, and trust in His protection. However, there is one other characteristic of those who have this wonderful relationship with the Lord.

2) Love the Lord and He will Bless You

5:12

Those who trust the Lord and rejoice in His protection also love His Name and see Him as their shield (cf 3:3). Because we love His name we love Him for who He is. They are joyful, they “boast” or “exult” (*NASV*) in the Lord. Because we love Him

who is righteous (v.8), we will pursue righteousness knowing this is the place of divine blessing. Such blessing is to be surrounded with God's favor like a shield, a shield that provides 360 degree protection! No human shield can do this; only one that is divine.

Conclusion

Knowing my God, my King, cares for me with such faithful love, with such promises of guidance and protection, I will seek Him as I begin each day. I will talk to Him in prayer. I will follow His righteous ways. I will shout to the Lord with joy because I love His Name, that Name which is above every name, even the name of Jesus my Lord (see Phil 2:9-11).